

VZCZCXRO2518
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #3265 3360146
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 010146Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9097
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAA/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI//N541// PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA// PRIORITY
RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/USFJ PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 1183
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 3544
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 9190
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 1754
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 4973
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6592
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2636
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2588
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2718
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS TOKYO 003265

SIPDIS

STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - IRAQ AND AIRPORT
CLOSURE IN THAILAND

11. LEAD STORIES: Top items on Monday morning included a
plunge in public support for Prime Minister Aso.

12. "Is Roadmap for Exit in Sight?" on the Iraqi
parliament's approval of a SOFA with the U.S., the
liberal Asahi editorialized (12/1): "A roadmap for the
U.S. to extricate itself from the quagmire in Iraq has
finally been set.... The SOFA can be regarded as
presenting an opportunity for the U.S. to ease the anti-
American sentiment prevalent in Iraq and the broader
Middle East. Much rides on whether the U.S. will be
able to withdraw its troops smoothly while continuing
to support reconstruction projects and national
reconciliation in Iraq. President-elect Obama is
expected to retain Secretary of Defense Gates due to
his accomplishment in turning around the security
situation in Iraq.... How will the next U.S.
administration move to restore the prestige America
lost over the Iraq war? The U.S. faces a tough road
(out of Iraq)."

13. "ASEAN Summit up in the Air" The business-oriented
Nikkei reported from Bangkok (12/1): "Following the
prolonged closure of two major airports in Thailand, it
is increasingly uncertain whether a series of
international meetings, including the ASEAN and East
Asia summits, can be held as scheduled in Chiang Mai in
mid-December. If these conferences are postponed, the
image of Thailand, which has been battered by the
airport shutdown, will further decline."

14. "National Image Damaged" The top-circulation,
moderate Yomiuri editorialized (11/29): "If the closure
of the airports is prolonged, an adverse economic

impact will be inevitable. Concern is mounting that Thailand's economy, including hotels, transport, and other tourism-related industries, will record negative growth in the final quarter of this year due to the worldwide economic slowdown. Political uncertainty is likely to affect foreign investors' interest (in Thailand)."

15. "Balance between Democracy and National Interest"

The business-oriented Nikkei argued in an editorial (11/29): "If the shutdown of one of Asia's major hub airports is prolonged, Thailand's economy will be hit hard, with the tourism and transport industries being affected. Chances are high that scheduled international conferences, including the ASEAN summit, will be put off. The Thai people should be very concerned that their country's interests could be undermined at various levels."

SCHIEFFER